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212308Z Nov 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 004652

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - ERIC
BARBORIAK
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: BUSH'S ASIA TRIP

1. Summary: The Taiwan dailies gave extensive reporting and editorial coverage November 19-21 to the APEC summit in Pusan and U.S. President George W. Bush's visit to Beijing, with a special emphasis on Bush's summit with Chinese President Hu Jintao Sunday. Coverage also focused on the campaigns for the upcoming 3-in-1 elections, the cross-strait deal on holiday charter flights, and the International Commission on Conserving Atlantic Tuna's decision to slash Taiwan's big-eye tuna quota for 2006. The pro-independence newspapers in general covered the Bush-Hu summit by focusing on Washington's disappointment with China's human rights and religious freedom, while the pro-unification and pro-status quo papers described both Washington and Beijing's desire to strengthen cooperation in not only bilateral, but also global issues. With regard to Taiwan, several newspapers reported the United States' determination to maintain military balance in East Asia and its reiteration that it does not support independence nor the use of force in the Taiwan Strait.

2. Almost all major Taiwan dailies editorialized on Bush's Asia trip, his speech in Kyoto, and the Bush-Hu summit. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" and "Taiwan Daily" asserted in their editorials that Washington should adjust and review its one China policy, adding that since Bush endorsed Taiwan's democracy, it should not try to suppress Taiwan's democracy simply to curry favor with China. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" urged Washington to contemplate on the degree to which Washington can keep a balance between safeguarding its own national interests and protecting Taiwan's democracy from China's military expansion. The centrist "China Times" ran an editorial on the Bush-Hu summit, saying that Washington evidently looks to use more direct contact to resolve U.S.-China disputes. Professor Chu Yun-han of National Taiwan University said in a commentary in the "China Times" that Bush's trip to East Asia indicated that the United States is trying its best to safeguard its strategic leadership in the region and prevent China from undermining Washington's role in East Asia. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" called Bush's speech in Kyoto a "pat on the back" but urged Taiwan not to overlook the fact that Washington needs Beijing's cooperation in most crucial areas. End summary.

A) "[While] Endorsing Taiwan's Democracy, [Washington] Should Not Suppress Taiwan's Democracy"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] asserted in an editorial (11/21):

"[W]e want to remind [Washington] that even though [U.S. President George W.] Bush endorsed Taiwan's democratic achievements, the U.S. government, constrained by China, has constantly shown reluctance in its policy toward Taiwan's further development of its democracy. For example, in order for Taiwan to become a normal country, rectifying its name and writing a new constitution are necessary steps for its democracy. But the U.S. government, perhaps out of its need to work with China in dealing with international issues or due to China's military intimidation against Taiwan, has constantly suppressed Taiwan's democracy to curry favor with China. .

"The United States as a democratic model and China's military intimidation are the two forces that have a strong influence on Taiwan's political evolution. . The fact that Bush hailed Taiwan's democracy on the one hand while the U.S. draws a red line on Taiwan's democracy on the other is incomprehensible to most Taiwan people. ."

B) "Since Bush Lauds Taiwan's Democracy, [Washington] Should Adjust Its 'One China Policy' in an Attempt to Push for Both Sides of the Taiwan Strait to Engage in a Dialogue That Carries No Pre-Condition"

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 100,000] editorialized (11/21):

". President [George W.] Bush's [Kyoto] speech turned Taiwan into an international focus. Whether this speech represents a change in Washington's cross-Strait policy and what impact the speech will have on Washington-Beijing-Taipei ties are also issues of concern. . But while endorsing Taiwan's democratic development, Bush should adopt concrete measures to consolidate Taiwan's democracy in an attempt to prevent the island from being annexed by China. The Bush administration should establish a channel to engage in direct contact and dialogue with Taiwan and adjust its 'one China policy' so as to create a sound environment for Taiwan's democracy. .

"The United States has always supported Taiwan's democracy. To sustain Taiwan's democracy and to ensure that political freedom will become the foundation of human rights protection ., the United States must support Taiwan in becoming a sovereign nation worthy of its name. . The United States should also make good use of Taiwan's strategic position, quickly and significantly enhancing Taiwan's strength to prevent the island from being marginalized. ."

C) "The Right Course for U.S.-Taiwan Ties"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] commented in an editorial (11/21):

"In a speech delivered last week in Kyoto, Japan, United States President George W. Bush lauded Taiwan as a model for freedom and prodded the leaders of the People's Republic of China to respond positively to meet their citizens' demands for liberty and openness. . What the Bush administration should really contemplate is the degree to which Washington can keep a balance between safeguarding its own national interests and protect Taiwan's full-fledged democracy from China's military expansionism while engaging in building a 'constructive, candid and cooperative' relations with an undemocratic PRC regime.

"The efforts of Taiwan's DPP government to initiate constitutional reforms should be treated as a process of democratic maturation and institutionalization. Washington should encourage Taiwan's efforts to upgrade its institutional foundations for democratic governance as a solid basis for a sustainable relationship."

D) "The Changing Washington-Beijing Relations as Viewed from the Bush-Hu Summit"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] commented in an editorial (11/21):

". In other words, when the rise of China is no longer a theory [but a fact], how will the United States address such a development? It is an issue of concern not only for Taiwan but for Asia as a whole. Following a series of events such as the U.S.-China jet collision, war on terrorism, and the Six-Party Talks, the United States has in fact been constantly fine-tuning its policy. This year is in particular a critical year [for U.S.-China relations]. U.S. officials ranging from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, Secretary of the Treasury John Snow, to the heads of Commerce Department have all visited mainland China in tow; even Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who holds a tough attitude toward Beijing, went to Beijing a month ago. Perhaps these moves may not be sufficient enough to judge whether the United States has changed its policy, but evidently, Washington looks to use greater contact to resolve U.S.-China disputes. Looking at the [official U.S.] language, [it is noteworthy that] more and more American officials choose to use 'manage' rather than 'challenge' to describe current Washington-Beijing relations. ."

E) "George W. Bush's Diplomatic Quandary"

Chu Yun-han, professor of political science of National Taiwan University, noted in the "Weekly Commentary" column of the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (11/21):

"[U.S. President George W.] Bush started his trip to East Asia last week, and he plans to visit four Northeast Asian countries including Mongolia. But has devoted the most time and energy to this trip [than any other trip] since he started his second term. The trip indicates that the United States is trying its best to safeguard its strategic leadership in East Asia, in particular, to prevent the rise of China from undermining Washington's leadership in the region. But basically the situation has developed to an extent that it is out of U.S. control. In just the past five years, East Asia has evolved and is no longer the same as it used to be. For many years, the last thing Washington wanted to see was the rise of regionalism in East Asia and

China playing a leading role in that process. It is exactly during the five years under Bush's term, however, that these two trends have taken shape. The vision of East Asian regionalism gradually emerges and assembles political support mainly because the United States has failed to come up with a plan that attracts most countries [in the region]. The Bush administration's deliberate manipulation which led China to confront Japan step by step also agitated many East Asian countries. The climax of Bush's trip this time was the APEC summit in Pusan. But many international observers sense that APEC has lost its focus and the function to continue developing. . Just as Joe Nye of Harvard University said, the real climax on this year's East Asian political stage is the first-ever East Asia summit to be held in Kuala Lumpur. [Unfortunately], this big show will feature Beijing, and the United States will be excluded. ."

F) "A Pat on the Back from President Bush"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] said in an editorial (11/19):

"Taiwan got an unexpected pat on the back this week when U.S. President George W. Bush praised this 'self-governing island' as 'a model of freedom' and urged mainland China to emulate it. Nothing would have gladdened Taiwan more than the American president's warm praise of Taiwan and gratuitous criticism of Beijing. . As there are many other 'models of freedom' in Asia, why did Bush single out Taiwan which he knew would irritate Beijing? He must have decided to do it purposely.

"President Bush chose Kyoto, Japan, as the venue to deliver his speech on democracy to send a blunt message to Beijing. Wrapped in democracy, the message is 'getting tough on China' on most issues, political, military, and economic. . President Bush's lavish praise for Taiwan, and his lecturing to Beijing should make President Chen Shui-bian and his pro-independence party jump about in glee. For too long, Taiwan has been under Beijing's heavy hand to squeeze its international living space, including this week's Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Busan, South Korea. Bush's speech has put Taiwan on the map, to the chagrin of Beijing.

"But realpolitik is about political reality. Bush's 'pat on the back' for Taiwan had to be followed by his reiteration of Washington's support for the 'one China' policy. President Bush has to confront the reality that Mainland China is a rising power that challenges American supremacy in Asia if not the world. He knows that U.S. relations with the Mainland are the most important of its foreign relations. Washington needs Beijing's cooperation in most crucial areas - including the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons programs. ."

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